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Though Given in Vain.

The Mysterious Egg.

A Berkshire Story.

BY

Charles A. Gunnison.

Though Given in Vain,

The Mysterious Egg

and

A Berkshire Story.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

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BY

CHARLES A. GUNNISON.

PRESS OF
COMMERCIAL PUBLISHING COMPANY
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To A. J. G. and S. G. K.

It was proposed by the publishers, when this book was first shown in manuscript, that the volume be called "The Cemetery," owing no doubt to the prominent part played in it by tombstones. To make a more cheerful effect I have sandwiched in a slice of mirth, and now present you a combination of churchyard and vegetable garden.

Yours,

Charles A. Gunnison.

Little Grange, Napa, 1889.

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THOUGH GIVEN IN VAIN.

I

On a vine-covered slope of Mount Epomeo, in sight of pretty Casamicciola, the famed summer resort of fashionable Italy, stood the home of Pietro Martano.

The blue sky above, the blue Mediterranean around him and smiling Ischia at his feet would seem all that a man could wish for, but Pietro Martano looked beyond.

He could see Naples with her yellow houses across the clear water and he knew the treasures of those plain-faced palaces, for Pietro Martano was a sculptor of no mean ability, and the marbles of the Museo Nazionale had been familiar to him since childhood.

He followed his art there and at Florence until

the death of his wife, when the care of his two daughters, Lucia and Francesca, devolved entirely upon him.

Among the summer visitors at Ischia were many Americans, for whom Martano worked at copying ancient statuary or cutting portrait busts. From these people he learned much about America and formed a desire to go there, thinking that he could find a better opening for his works than at home.

In the winter of 1870, Pietro Martano sold his house and studio near Casamicciola, and with his daughters sailed from Brindisi to New York, and finally drifted to San Francisco.

It was a bitter disappointment to him, when he reached the City of the Golden Gate, to find that little or nothing was cared for his art.

He could barely make a living by cutting portrait busts for the "new rich" with whom the city then swarmed, for fortune often turned away from his sitter before the bust was paid for, and many a plebeian head, under the name of Greek poet or Roman general, found its way to the auction rooms, giving up its pedestal to some newcomer who was in luck for the moment.

In the meantime, Lucia and Francesca were allowed to grow up about as they pleased; Lucia, who was the older, giving what education she had to her

sister, while both took care of the three rooms in the second story of the little frame house which was their home.

In a flat part of the city, amid the continual screaming and rolling of engines and trains, stood, in a row of dilapidated, two-story buildings, the lodging house of Mrs. Smith. This house had a most repellant air about it; the very sidewalk stubbed your toes, seeming also to take malicious delight in tripping up children and cutting them with its nails. The front steps slanted out, giving hardly a foothold. When you finally reached the bell-handle, you were compelled to knock, for the bell was not responsive. Mrs. Smith having opened the door, you were at once assaulted by the odors of many dinners, nearly stunning you in their frantic efforts to escape through the opening where appeared the gray head of the landlady.

If your business called you to the second floor, the stairs seemed to slap you in the face as they stood there threateningly, armed with a spindling newel-post and clad in a ragged carpet. Every step of the way was contested by these belligerent stairs, and, arrived in the upper hall, it was with a feeling of relief that you saw the friendly notice, "Pietro Martano, Sculptor."

The sun seldom shone upon this little house till

late in the afternoon, if the fog and dust allowed it to appear even then; for the great brick and stone edifice of the railroad offices towered far above it on the opposite side of the street. The rooms of Treasurer Hobson faced the house of Mrs. Smith, but seldom did Treasurer Hobson find time to look across the way; and if by chance he did glance from the window, his eyes never went lower than the smoky chimney tops of Mrs. Smith's humble house and then raised themselves till they feasted on the grass covered hills of San Mateo.

It was a dusty, gray, sunless day in July ; the hills were no longer green, and banks of fog rolled fiercely down upon the city. Treasurer Hobson was busy at his desk, finishing his day's labor. Tom, his son, stood by the window, talking by the aid of the deaf and dumb alphabet with some one across the way.

Suddenly breaking out laughing, he exclaimed, "What a name for a doll!"

"What name?" asked his father, as he closed his desk and wheeled his chair around.

"There is a girl across the street who has a plaster cast for a doll, and calls it Cupid. She has just whipped it and stood it in the corner of the window sill. I asked her the name of the doll with my hands, and she answered in the same way. That is a queer kind of doll, isn't it, father?"

"Yes, Tom, but a girl who whips Cupid cannot expect to have many favors from that little god in the future. He will have his revenge on her, Tom. Where is this Cupid-beater?" The great treasurer looked out of his window and down to Mrs. Smith's poor house, where, in one of the upper windows, sat a girl about fourteen years of age, with dark eyes and hair and unmistakably Italian features. She drew back from the window when she saw the second face appear, and presently a little hand reached around the curtain, seized the disgraced Cupid and took him into the room.

"Who lives on the upper floor of your house, Henry?" asked Mr. Hobson, turning to his office boy, who was putting the room in order.

"The little girl, sir, is Francesca. She plays with that Cupid statue because she has no doll. Her father is Pietro Martano, the sculptor, and he is pretty poor, so mother says, sir. Her sister Lucia, who is seventeen, works in a glove factory in town, sir. Lucia is a very nice girl, sir."

"Well, Henry, take that and buy the little one as nice a doll as you can find," said Mr. Hobson, handing the boy some money. "Tell her it is from her lover over the way. Come, Tom!"

"Oh, please don't let him say that, father!" cried

poor Tom, blushing. "She might believe it, you know."

"Never mind that, Tom. For a girl who stands Cupid in the corner there is not much danger of having her heart pierced by the little archer," answered the treasurer. "It seems also, rather self conceited on your part, to imagine that you are the only one she smiles at on this side of the way," he added, with a laugh.

Henry was the son of Mrs. Smith, the lodging house keeper, and had been "boy" in the treasurer's office since he was quite a little fellow. He now being nineteen years old, was about to change his position for a more lucrative one, on the paper route of a local train. It was a step higher for him; and moreover, he told Tom confidentially that as he expected to marry Lucia Martano as soon as he was old enough, he must have some money. "For, a fellow, Tom, can live any way, you know, but a fellow's wife must have things," he explained.

A few weeks after, Henry began his new work, and Thomas Hobson started for an Eastern school.

The happy little girl over the way still played with the Cupid doll, as the mysterious, new one was so beautiful it could only be looked at.

II

Little Francesca seldom spoke, but there were great thoughts always at work beneath that covering of black curls, and though the large, dreamy eyes sometimes gave a glimpse of them, the red lips would never tell. Francesca was alone all day, and had no one to be her companion but Cupid and the wax doll, which had been found one morning at her door with a card on it saying, "From your lover over the way."

Francesca was but a little girl, still in her doll playing years, but girls who have lived alone, as she had, cannot be judged by common rules; so, little as she was, she thought herself large enough to fall in love.

Every day she watched the window in the great pile of brick and mortar which threw its cold shadows upon her so late into the afternoon. There were a hundred windows all alike, but Francesca saw only one, and that was the one where she had first seen her "lover across the way."

Poor little lady, she watched in vain! Sometimes she could see a tall man with a long, white beard, but never the smiling face of him with whom she had once talked in deaf and dumb alphabet about the Cupid doll. He never came, but Francesca was faithful, watching and waiting. It became part of her daily occupation to watch, and in a year the habit of looking up, from her work or play, at the window in its gray stone frame, had so grown upon her, that she did not know how often she did so.

Three years passed, Lucia was married to Henry, and now Francesca was almost always alone, for her father had his studio in town and came home only at evening. The long silent day was seldom broken by a voice, and Francesca had only her own thoughts to keep her company. Though the "lover across the way" never came, to her he was still her lover; and as Francesca grew in years and stature, her ideal kept pace with her. She looked no longer for the face she so well remembered, but for one maturer, with a mustache and fine eyes, like a real story lover, who was some day to look over to her from that window.

Little Francesca would give a little laugh, shaking her finger at Cupid, who now stood all day long throwing kisses from the mantel shelf. "Ah, cruel little god, you are punishing me now for the many

whippings I gave you. Forgive me!" But silent Cupid still stood, with fingers at lips, blowing kisses.

Henry had told her the name of the old gentleman in the office over the way, and Francesca knew whose father he was, and gave him a "good morning" every day when he came and a "good evening" on his departure. To be sure, he never knew it; but the life of Francesca was made up of acts and courtesies which people never knew.

Pietro Martano's love of art had been inherited by his younger daughter, and many were the little clay statuettes she modeled. Francesca would work from morning till night, moulding the fine, sympathetic clay, showing as great a power as any Treasurer, for she caused knights in armor, peasant girls in pretty costumes, gods and goddesses at her command to spring from the earth.

Yes, little Francesca had as much power as any of them, though to be sure the world did not talk about Mrs. Smith's second floor, while it wondered without cessation at the inmates of the brick building on the other side of the street. So the little lonely one sat watching and waiting, and many a time during the day she sang the song she had written; she would fit it to all the tunes she knew, and then begin again:

"Window, window over the way,
What wilt thou frame for me to-day?
Shall it be the picture I long to see,
Or must I wait till I, like thee,
Am crowned with gray?

"Ah, frame me my lover over the way!
No picture fairer couldst thou display.
Frame me my lover, decreed by fate!
Must I longer watch and longer wait?
Show him, I pray!"

Then to work again would go the little dreamer, full of faith.

Two uneventful years passed. Sometimes Lucia would come and spend the day, bringing the two children, Pietro and Francesca; on these days Henry would come to dinner. Great was the preparation in Mrs. Smith's kitchen for the event, and a greater army of odors arranged themselves behind the front door. Francesca gave her window garden its finest toilet on these occasions, and often went so far as to tie a bright flower on some of the bloomless plants, causing the calla to bear a rose or the sickly pink in the corner to display a yellow chrysanthemum, while all of them had colored ribbons to hold them erect, in place of the every-day twine.

Dust, fog and smoke, together and separate, were whirling about the streets, over the house-tops and into the doorways. The wind whistled defiance in everybody's face, and even dared to rattle

the windows of the great railroad offices with as much freedom as if they were to be no more respected than Mrs. Smith's hall skylight, which seemed to be a special butt for the free wind, for it rattled the fastenings when there seemed scarcely a breeze anywhere else. Lucia was knitting, the children were asleep, and Francesca was wooing a knight of the Crusade to come boldly forth from his hiding place in the yellow clay.

"Do you ever expect to marry, Francesca?" asked Lucia, without raising her eyes from her knitting.

"He has not come yet, dear sister," laughed Francesca, looking unconsciously at the gray-framed window over the way.

"Of course not, for no one sees you here, my precious; you must come out of your nest. There is the conductor of Henry's train who is unmarried, and James Jones, who has the route next to Henry; they are both of them very nice, I assure you. Then there is the man who keeps the shop in front of our house; he has money in the bank, and is quite a gentleman and good-looking. He'd be a good match. He is a widower, I know, but he has only one child. You are too modest, dear; you must not be afraid of looking too high, for I assure that you are worth being a wife to any and all of them."

Francesca smiled, but this time did not look up at the window.

"What if I had a lover over the way?"

"In the railroad building? Oh, you dear little innocent idiot, you know nothing of the world. Why, sister, those fellows, though they look so fine, haven't enough to clothe themselves, much less a wife. Why, dear, the paper men and conductors quite look down on them, and Mr. Hodge, the shopkeeper, could buy them out ten times. Why, I'd rather have Henry than twenty, yes, fifty of them for a husband. Don't think of such a thing, Francesca. Henry will be here in half an hour, and he can tell you of many more, I am sure."

Francesca glanced from the window, turned pale, then flushed, sprang from her chair, and with her clay-daubed hands clasped Lucia about the neck, crying, "He has come, he has come at last!" Then she threw herself half crying, half laughing, down upon the sofa.

"If he has come, I don't see why you should go into fits over it," exclaimed Lucia in wonder. "It can't be Henry, either, for his train isn't in yet. There, you've waked the baby with your noise," and away flew Lucia, forgetting her surprise as she heard little Pietro's cry from the bedroom.

"He has come at last," said Francesca softly. "My picture is framed."

III

When Francesca had recovered from her tears, she went to the window and peeped from behind the curtains. Her picture was not in its frame, but on the stone steps before the great door stood the "lover from over the way." Five years had passed since she had last seen him, but after all there are more surprising things happen every day than that a fanciful young girl alone with her dreams, as Francesca was, should be faithful to her ideal lover. Her imagination made him real to her, and had the time of waiting been doubled, her true heart would have kept its faith.

Francesca knew the face of Thomas Hobson; it was not the boyish face she had seen, she did not expect that, for the face had grown older each year with herself. He looked just as she had dreamed of him, even the mustache was there, like a real story lover's, and Francesca's heart beat faster. She always gave his face to her knights of clay, and now to see the same face alive made her happy indeed. Thomas Hobson stood in the doorway, looking at the row of houses across the street. He looked all

along the line till his eye rested on Mrs. Smith's, and then poor Francesca almost fainted, when she saw him walk directly to their door.

The bell rang, (or rather the bell was pulled, for that bell never would ring,) and Francesca heard the handle strike the door, and the sound thrilled to the very tips of her fingers.

"I shall be first to greet him." With a quick glance in the mirror, a smoothing of the hair and brushing the dry clay from her fingers, she ran down stairs and was at the door. Francesca had not noticed the hallway much before, but now she did wish that the carpet were not quite so shabby and that Mrs. Smith would keep the kitchen door closed.

There was no help for it, however, and with her heart thumping so hard that she thought he must hear it, she opened the door. The imprisoned odors fought and struggled, and wildly rushed by Thomas Hobson as he lifted his hat to Francesca. She could not look up at him for fear that she should cry, so she gazed at his shining boots.

"Does Henry Smith still live here?" he asked.

"No; yes, that is," stammered Francesca, "he does not live here, but will be here to dinner to-night. We expect him in a few minutes. Will you come in?" Thomas Hobson came in and stood in the little entry. Now, Francesca should certainly

have asked the visitor into Mrs. Smith's parlor, but the foolish creature never thought in her excitement, but that the visitor was her own. Had she not waited for him for five years?

Thomas Hobson, being duly slapped in the face by the aggressive stairs and threatened by the spindling newel post, was ushered into the little parlor of Pietro Martano.

Lucia, having quieted the baby, had him in her arms when Francesca entered with Thomas Hobson.

"This is Henry's wife, sir, my sister Lucia," said Francesca.

Thomas Hobson greeted her, and taking the child, sat down upon the sofa, placing his right hand upon the very arm where the tears of joy, so lately shed upon it, could not have been dry. Francesca saw where that hand was placed, and she cried there many a time again, for joy, for grief and for nothing at all. "My name is Thomas Hobson; I knew Henry as a boy, and shall never forget him, for he saved me from drowning once, when I was about twice as old as this little fellow," he said, smoothing Pietro's hair. Francesca also smoothed Pietro's hair that evening and kissed it when she bid him good-night.

Thomas Hobson told of their boyish pranks of old times, but did not recall the episode of the doll

Francesca thought, "He remembers, but will not speak."

"Who models these pretty statuettes?" he asked, as he examined one on the mantel.

"My sister Francesca makes them," answered Lucia.

"Can you make me another like this, or will you sell me this one?" asked Thomas Hobson, turning toward the artist. Francesca blushed, stammered, and began to cry.

"My dear Miss Martano, pray pardon me. I have unintentionally hurt your feelings," exclaimed Thomas Hobson. "We men of business are too thoughtless."

"You are not at all to blame," said Lucia, "Francesca is too sensitive, and cries for no reason. She has been so much alone that she is not like other people. She thinks a great deal of her statues. My mother-in-law and myself are the only possessors of her work, as she makes them for love only."

"And it is for love that I want it!" said Thomas Hobson under his breath, smiling at the neat turn he gave the words.

Only Francesca heard, and no one else could have understood those words as she did. To the relief of everybody's embarrassment, Henry came, and of course as Thomas Hobson could not stay to dinner,

he went away when Mrs. Smith called up stairs that all was ready. Strange to say, as Thomas Hobson drove home, no thought of pretty Francesca entered his mind; he only said to himself' "How in the world can people live in an eternal smell of onions and cabbage!"

In a few days, when the clay was quite dry, the statuette of the knight was carefully packed and sent across the way to Mr. Thomas Hobson. There was a little tremor or wavering in the formation of the letters of the name, but neither the boy who carried it, the charwoman who spelled it out in the hall, nor even the handsome young man who received it saw that wavering. Thomas Hobson took the statuette from the box, admired the work, carefully packed it again, pasted a new address over the old one and before night the little figure was far away. Thomas Hobson had made a pretty turn to Lucia's words, for it was indeed for love that he wanted that clay statuette. Next day Francesca received a beautiful book, "Idyls of the King." On the first page was the same name which she had written on the package that held the clay knight, but there was no wavering tremor in that bold autograph, "Yours truly, Thomas Hobson." Those four words held more for Francesca than all the "Idyls of the King." The beautiful book was food for her hungry, lonely

heart; but hungry, lonely hearts ought not always to be fed. Winds blew and ceased, rain fell and dried away, and winds and fog came back again.

The wind rattles the hall skylight of Mrs. Smith's lodging house and whistles at every window of the brick building opposite, but it does not rattle the window frames today, for the heavy, iron shutters are closed and it cannot get at them. But there is something for the wind to sport with. There is black crape on the handle of the outer door and a little piece of paper beside it tells that Treasurer Hobson is dead. So the wind does not strive with the shutters, but pulls the crape and shakes it out, knots it, whirls it against the door, fills its fine meshes with dust, wets it with fog and tears the ends to shreds till night comes down. Francesca sits at her window opposite, her eyes are red with weeping. There is one whom she would comfort but she may not go to him. There is no light outside the house or inside, except when the street cars pass. But though the night grows darker and the wind whistles more wildly, poor little Francesca can still see the fluttering crape, for it is darker than the night.

IV

Pietro Martano had finally succeeded and by judicious investments of the money he earned by his art, had made himself a comfortable little fortune, quite enough to allow him to live at ease in his old Italian home. Often he and Francesca talked over the subject of returning, but she begged him to stay longer, for she liked the city. Trusting old Pietro believed that she was telling the truth. Perhaps she was, but surely it must have been something more than the dust, the fog, the wind and the noise which Francesca saw that made her prefer San Francisco to the warm air and clear skies of her native island.

Pietro Martano was at home now much of the time; a little back room of Mrs. Smith's had been converted into a studio where he had modeled a bust of the late treasurer from photographs and from studies of his son's face. The chiselling had been finished and Pietro was now giving the last touches to the marble, which had come home from the workman's hands that day. During the modeling of the bust, Thomas Hobson necessarily spent many hours in the little studio, and Francesca and he had many

conversations, or rather, he talked while she listened, and her love grew more passionate every day. Her eyes brightened at his coming, and grew dreamy and dull when he was gone.

Alone, Francesca would throw herself upon the sofa where her tears had fallen so often, and press her hot face against the arm. "Oh, does he love me? Why can he not speak? I may deceive myself!" and at that awful thought the poor little maiden would feel a chill like death creep over her. "Had I a mother to give me words of comfort, I might forget him if he did not love me. No, no, I would rather love him and die than to forget him!" and again the hot tears would fall. Always upon the mantel stood Cupid, blowing kisses from his fingers. Poor Francesca!

The bust was completed and pronounced perfect. The day after it had been sent home, Thomas Hobson called. "I want to speak with you," he said, as they stood in the doorway of the little studio. Francesca did not answer, but her heart stood still. "I have a great favor to ask. Your sister Lucia once said that you did your modeling for love only. Here," he continued, placing an envelope in her hand, "is a picture, Will you make me a medallion of it in low relief? You are the only one, my dear friend, of whom I can ask this."

Francesca mechanically drew the picture from the cover. It was the face of a lovely woman with large eyes and clear features. "Is she not beautiful?"—Oh, cruel Thomas Hobson!—

"She is, indeed," answered Francesca. There was a firmness about her voice which startled her. "I will do it for you."

"Thank you, many times," and he pressed her cold hand in his as she leaned against the door. "Good night."

"Good night," she answered, and he went down the stairs.—Blind Thomas Hobson!—

"Father," said Francesca that night when he returned from his town studio, "I am willing to go home now."

Pietro Martano cancelled all his orders and began joyfully to prepare for his return, while Francesca worked at home on the medallion, and while she rounded and touched the soft clay, and studied the beautiful face before her, she sang softly to herself Elaine's little song:

"Sweet is true love, tho' given in vain, in vain;
And sweet is death, who puts an end to pain:
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

"Love, art thou sweet? then bitter death must be
Love, thou art bitter; sweet is death to me.
O, love, if death be sweeter, let me die.

"Sweet love, that seems not made to fade away,
Sweet death, that seems to make us loveless clay,
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

"I fain would follow love, if that could be;
I needs must follow death, who calls for me;
Call, and I follow, I follow! Let me die."

When the medallion in marble, came home, she touched it a little here and there, and set it in its case of crimson velvet and kissed the round, full lips of the beautiful face.

Thomas Hobson, (now treasurer in his father's place,) had come over from his office and bid them good bye, for they were to start early on the morrow. For several nights past, Francesca had noticed at his office window a light burning, so she told him that if he were to be there that night, she would send the medallion over when it was cased. He said as he had letters to write, he would be there till late.

It was a moonlight night, each cornice and window frame of the great building showed clearer cut than by day. The light streamed through the half-closed shutters of the treasurer's office, as Francesca walked quickly across the street and opened the iron door. She hesitated one moment, but as the thought came to her, "It is good bye forever," she went on.

"Do you want Mr. Hobson?" said a gruff voice by her side.

"Yes; I know the way," she answered.

"I can't go with you for I have to watch the door; but you'll find it easy enough."

She climbed the broad stairs and softly knocked at the door of the room she knew so well, but which she never had entered. There came no response to her knock; the door was ajar, so she pushed it open and went in. The room was lighted by one jet of gas which was turned low. On a lounge near the window, with one hand under his head, lay Thomas Hobson asleep. Francesca was about to waken him but suddenly changed her mind as she spied upon the desk, lying among some old letters, a pair of scissors with blue enameled handles. Picking them up, she stepped noiselessly forward and placed the medallion case upon his breast, then gently raising a lock of the brown hair which hung over his forehead, she clipped it off and held it in her hand.

The click of the scissors disturbed him and he drew his hand from under his head, but heavy breathing soon told her that he was sleeping again soundly. Poor little Francesca, she trembled and tears stood in her eyes as she bent over that handsome face and placed a fervent kiss upon the brow and lips. Then she swiftly left the room. "He is sleeping; I did not disturb him," she said to the man as she passed the outer door. "So was I, Miss; much obliged to you for waking me." When Fran-

cesca entered her room she found the scissors still in her hand. "A fit memento of this sad night," she thought, and she placed them among her treasures.

* * * * *

In 1883, I was in Rome where I had been studying sculpture. My friend, Thomas Hobson, had been married the year before and was now travelling over Europe with his bride. It was in July when they reached Rome. I had remained in the city only to meet them, for the weather was oppressively hot and everyone who could, had gone to the north or the sea coast. We decided to spend the summer together, and while Mr. and Mrs. Hobson were looking about Rome for a few days, I started for Capri to procure accommodations. Hearing that all the hotels at Capri were much crowded, I wrote to my friend, Pietro Martano, at Ischia. I knew that he was acquainted with Thomas Hobson, and thought that we might make a pleasanter stay where we knew some of the residents. He wrote me to come over on the little steamer from Naples, saying that there were still vacancies at the principal hotels.

On the landing at Ischia I met Signor Martano and Francesca. We rode up to Casamicciola, and above to the pretty Hotel Piccola Sentinella where Martano and his daughter were living and where I

had often been before. Francesca appeared very nervous and as I helped her from the donkey she slipped a note into my hand. I did not have a chance to read it until late in the afternoon.

"Dear Mr. Gordon: Will you meet me this evening, about eight o'clock, in the tea-garden? F. M."

I met Francesca, a little before the appointed time, among the palms of the tea garden, attached to Hotel Piccola. "Mr. Gordon," she said abruptly, "I beg you will, in kindness to me, do all you can to keep Mr. and Mrs. Hobson from coming here to Casamicciola." I could see that she spoke with difficulty, as if restraining herself from giving way to her emotions. "As a reason for this strange request I will tell you of my life." She then with rapid utterance related to me the story, which you already know. It was nearly nine o'clock when we rose from the bench where we had been sitting. The night was very dark, neither moon nor stars were visible, for a mist or vapor had hung all day over the bay and the usual evening breeze had not come to disperse it. We walked to the hotel and I left her at the ladies' door. "Now, Mr. Gordon, you understand me," she said; "endowed with a most vivid imagination, I made the unreal real and caused all words and acts of others to follow the lines of my own thoughts. I have lived to see my

folly. You will grant my request?" "I will do all in my power to keep them away," I answered. "God bless you!" she replied, then passionately seizing my hand she added in a low, trembling voice, "I dare not see him again. I cannot see her, his wife, for, Mr. Gordon, I—I love him more to-day than ever, ever before." She rushed into the house without another word. Poor Francesca!

The night was oppressive and sultry and I lay down on a settee in the main hall. The house was quiet as most of the inmates were at the theatre in town. Suddenly I felt a chill pass over me; my head began to swim. I staggered to my feet and to the door. The stone paving of the floor cracked, the walls opened, then a terrible, deafening roar rose from the town below. The earthquake! At that moment a female figure rushed from the door. "Francesca, is this you?" I cried running toward the woman in time to catch her, fainting, in my arms. I looked into her face; she was not Francesca. The walls of the hotel fell in and down went the whole crashing mass into the earth. Above the sound of the falling stones and timber I could hear the cries of the victims.

Men and women rushed by me, crying, "To the boats, to the sea!" The water from the bathing tanks, broken from its walls, tore in a torrent through

the garden. Something struck me and I knew no more. With hundreds of others I was carried to Naples, where, like few, I found dear friends to care for me. Everybody now knows the fate of lovely Casamicciola, which is no more.

During my illness, I had spoken unknowingly of many things, and one day when Thomas Hobson and I were seated on the quay at Lucerne, I told him, at his request, the story of Francesca.

* * * * *

When Thomas Hobson sees that pretty name, I know there are tears welling up to his eyes, but though you do not see them drop upon his cheeks, they fall back upon his heart.

Francesca—that name recalls to me the Protestant graveyard at Rome, not with its proud pyramid of Cestus, but with the white slab which says—

"FRANCESCA MARTANO.

'Sweet is true love, though given in vain, in vain;
And sweet is death, who puts an end to pain.
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.'"

THE MYSTERIOUS EGG.

The following story was told me by the Oberförster Auffhammer of Schalkhausen, Bavaria, who heard it from his grandfather, who, in turn, heard it from his grandfather, and so on back to the very date of the event:

It was almost nine hundred years ago. Queen Cunigundi had just planted, with her own royal hands, the little linden tree upon the Burg at Nuremberg, and all the town of Windsheim was talking of the event, when there came, one afternoon about sunset, a tall, black-haired foreigner, who applied for admission at the great south gate. The guards, taking him to be a Jew, would not let him enter the city; for then, and even to within thirty years of the

present time, no Israelites were allowed inside the walls after dark, lest they should poison the wells.

The foreigner was angry at being driven away from the gate; but, as he could not express his rage in good, round Teutonic, he seized a great golden globe, which hung on his mule's back with his other baggage, and, flinging it at the old warden, with a terrible but unintelligible oath, rode off at a rapid rate toward Illesheim.

The golden ball did not explode, nor even break, but lay quietly in the long, reed-like grass by the moat-side. Such a thing as this ball had never before been seen in Windsheim, and the more the old warden looked at it the more nervous he became, till at last he sent his little son to ring the great bell at the Rathhaus, to call together the wise and reverend Burgermeister and his council.

When they had assembled, the cause of the alarm was given by the old warden himself, who had left his post at the gate in charge of an under-soldier.

"Most learned Burgermeister," he said, and his eyes stood out with excitement so that they almost came beyond his red, round cheeks, "I have seen the devil. He came riding on a mule and talking in a strange language, which I, not being a learned burgermeister, could not understand. The longer I think of it the surer I am that I saw his forked tail;

and now, most excellent Burgermeister, I can swear that I saw his horns. And surely it was the devil, for who but he could have thrown me so big a ball of solid gold, to bribe me to let him come through the gate? But I drove him off, nor did I take his golden ball, for I am an honest man, and will not, any more than this learned council, sell my town to the devil."

Here the council cast sly glances at each other.

"Nor do I care for this gold. No, there it lies at the gate, where it fell," and the fat warden grew fatter with self-satisfaction, as he imagined his strong resistance to the great temptation.

At the naming of a ball of gold, the Burgermeister stood up, and all the council with him, for the sound of that word in those days had the same electric effect upon a burgermeister that it does at this very day, and with one accord they all moved toward the south gate, where the fat warden, with much trepidation, pointed out the shining globe still lying where it had first fallen.

"It must be brought to the Rathhaus," exclaimed one of the council.

"Ay," replied the Burgermeister, "and to be brought to the Rathhaus makes it necessary that it be moved."

At this wise remark, all the people nodded assent, but no one attempted to touch the golden ball.

"It will explode if we touch it," cried out the fat warden.

"Coward!" answered the Burgermeister, "we must be brave, and show that we are men worthy of our city. Sir Warden, I command you to pick up the golden ball and bring it to the Rathhaus; but do not touch it till we, the council, first get out of your way and take our seats in the hall; then pick it up. Do not be a coward; look at us, the Burgermeister and council of Windsheim, and learn a lesson; we know nothing of fear! Let the ball explode—what do we care?" And the whole council of brave and learned burgers hastened pell-mell toward the Rathhaus, as the warden, with fear and trembling, moved to pick up the golden globe.

But he first kissed his wife and children farewell. Then, taking a long draught of beer with his friends, he stepped down to the bank where the ball lay rich and lustrous in the torchlight. As the thing did not move, he grew bolder, and finally put his hand on it.

"It is cold," he cried; and raised it bravely, in his arms, amid the joyful shouts of the assembled people, who followed him with fife, music and songs,

as he bore it to the Rathhaus in triumph, and placed it in the council hall.

Then all the people gave six lusty cheers for the brave Burgermeister and learned council who had dared to order the warden to move the mysterious ball, regardless of all consequences. When it was laid upon the table in the great, gothic hall, the wise men drew about it and the Burgermeister (who, in fact, saw it then for the first time, as he peeped over the shoulders of his council,) exclaimed in his most impressive manner, as he pushed through the crowd, and to the wonder and admiration of all, put his hand upon the golden globe.

"Men of Windsheim, in the council hall assembled, know ye all that I am a wise and brave man. I have traveled much, and once, when in the southern land, I saw these golden balls for sale in the market-place. It is not the gift of the devil, nor is it gold."

Here the council all dropped their chins.

"No, O men of Windsheim, it is neither; and know ye what travel and learning have done for me. This golden-colored ball which you see before you is—*an elephant's egg!* And, when it is hatched, we will be proud owners of a big elephant—the largest animal in the world."

The people cheered and danced for joy, and the

youths, and maidens, and small children began at once to cry and long to see the elephant.

"How shall it be hatched?" cried one of the council.

"Bring forth a big hen," exclaimed the pompous Burgermeister. There was a stir in the crowd, and in a few moments the women returned with a multitude of hens. The largest was selected, but it could not cover the great egg.

"Bring forth a goose," cried the Burgermeister; and he grew so very pompous that he burst the loops off his doublet.

The women went and brought geese, and the Burgermeister took the largest. The whole assembly was now startled by one of the women going into hysterics and screaming,

"O Judas, it's a *gander!* O Judas Iscariot, it's a *gander!*"

And, sure enough, it was a gander which the learned Burgermeister had selected. The council then decided that as a gander knew nothing of incubation from personal experience, he should be condemned as an intruder, and roasted in the Burgermeister's kitchen. After this short interruption, the largest goose was taken, but even the goose could not half cover the egg.

"Well!" cried the Burgermeister, growing red

and very angry, "if there is no other goose within the walls of Windsheim large enough to cover an elephant's egg, I will do it myself."

"Bravo! bravo!" shouted all the people. "Long live our noble and wise Burgermeister; he will hatch the elephant's egg."

A bed was brought into the hall and the golden-colored egg laid carefully down in the middle of it, and the fat, puffing Burgermeister undressed and crawled in beside it, while they put the warm feather-bed on top of him. Thus the great undertaking of hatching the golden elephant egg was begun.

For three long weeks the Burgermeister lay between the soft feather beds, keeping the golden egg as warm as toast.

The last day of the third week arrived, and the egg was carefully examined, but no sign of life within it could be discovered.

"Perhaps," suggested a small boy with a big head, "it's a bad egg;" but he was immediately publicly spanked by the Burgermeister's *frau* for his impudent and uncalled-for suggestion, and also to give force to the proverb which says: "Children should be seen and not heard."

"An elephant's egg is larger than a hen's egg, and therefore must take longer in hatching. Just as that of the goose takes four weeks, this must undoubtedly

take five. I will return to the nest and proceed with the incubation."

Two more weeks passed, and yet no signs of the shell opening. The council met and held a long consultation ; one of them advanced the opinion that the egg might contain a girl elephant, and that was the reason the Burgermeister did not know how to hatch it, and that his *frau* could possibly be more successful, as she was already the mother of eight flaxen-headed daughters. This idea was hooted down at once, as it seemed to reflect unfavorably upon the great power of the wise Burgermeister by implying that he was not so well able to hatch a girl elephant as a boy elephant ; so the insulting insinuator was deprived of his rank, and banished from Windsheim.

Then the great Burgermeister spoke out, and his face lighted up with the idea ;

" Wise council of Windsheim, I have at last learned the cause of this failure. The egg is not a bad egg, nor does it matter whether it contains a male or female elephant, twins, or triplets; but the whole fault lies in the close atmosphere of the Rathhalle; for I have done all that could be required of me for the past five weeks, and warmed this great egg as conscientiously as if I were its own mother. Men of

Windsheim, elephants hatch their young in the open air!"

Cheer upon cheer echoed through the great hall, as the Burgermeister made the announcement, and amid joyful acclamations the golden egg, followed by the fat old fellow, was carried outside the city walls and placed in an open field. The wise Burgermeister seated himself upon it, and, throwing his robes of office about him, took a good swallow of double beer, and with hopeful heart began his incubating once again.

About the middle of the third week of the open-air hatching, a mysterious and very encouraging cracking was heard in the shell. The Burgermeister pressed harder. The shell cracked louder, and, with a great crash, the whole thing collapsed, and the Burgermeister came with a thud upon the ground.

"It is hatched! it is hatched!" he cried; and, just then, a little animal with long ears ran by, and, sitting up on its hind legs, looked inquiringly at the happy Burgermeister and his two attendants.

"Come here, come here, little elephant, I am your own papa," cried the Burgermeister, with tears in his eyes, as he saw the little elephant turn tail and hop out of sight into the woods.

"That was only a wild hare," said one of the attendants.

"A hare!" cried the Burgermeister, with indignation, as he sat among the broken fragments of the golden egg. "Can you imagine that a *hare*, after you have seen me hatching and working over an *elephant's* egg for the past months? You shall be hanged this day at sundown. Was that a hare?" he asked, as he turned to the other.

"Great sir, it was, undoubtedly, a most beautiful little elephant; don't hang me, please."

"You shall not be hanged, but I will make you one of my council, for you are a wise man."

"The more I think of it, the more I am sure it was an elephant," quickly spoke out the first attendant; "and I know you must be its father, for it resembles you so much, for its ears were like a—a—please don't have me hanged."

"I will pardon you, then, for you seem rather wise also; but now, let us return to the city with the shell of the golden elephant's egg."

All the people rejoiced at the success of the incubation, but regretted the escape of the little elephant, and to this day the children of Windsheim still look for the return of the naughty elephant that ran away from his papa so many years ago. At the place where the elephant was hatched, many more eggs came out from the ground the next year, strange to say, and though they are very common now in Wind-

sheim and all over Germany, the good citizens refuse to incubate them, for they remember the dying words of the great and wise Burgermeister of Cunigundi's time :

"I have had fifteen children in my life, but to be father to fifty children would be nothing to the work of hatching into the world one little baby elephant."

So the golden eggs come every year, and the merry housewives of Windsheim, as soon as the welcome Christmastide draws near, cut them up, and, mixing in savory spices, mold them into great round, golden, steaming puddings; and people nowadays call the great elephant eggs—*pumpkins*.

A BERKSHIRE STORY.

Do you know those lovely autumn days, such as can be had only in the little valleys of the Berkshire Hills? No sadness is there. It is the death of the year indeed, but such a glorious, triumphant death—the corruptible putting on the incorruptible; and, as we look in wonder at the gold and crimson foliage, and gather from the low-lying meadows the last fringed gentians, we feel a kindliness toward Death so beautiful, hopefully whispering to ourselves, as our hearts overflow with love to the Divine Giver, "and we shall likewise be changed." Quietly onward flows the Housatonic, fringed with pretty osiers and nodding rushes; how slowly the river flows along—not straight ahead, like other rivers, but loi-

tering, and winding about, as if loth to leave the lovely scenes through which he passes. Then, how often in the springtime he roguishly overflows his banks, and reaches out till he kisses the feet of the verdant hills, and, taking back a flower or fern frond, snatched from their coy grasp, returns to his course, bearing it on his breast, a love-token forever.

Ah! How I love you, dear old Berkshire, at all seasons; but to-day, in the golden month, seated here in the sunlight, listening to those strange little warblers, I feel that autumn is the dearest season of the year. It is the early autumn of my life, also; and, as I look out over the meadow, shaded by its five symmetrical elms, and farther on, to the misty willows which border the river banks, standing in bright relief against the mysterious darkness of the wooded hills, I can also look over my past life and remember the time when I used to play in that meadow, and when that dark wood was not a mystery to me. But now, what a strange feeling comes over me when I walk across that meadow, and how I long to call in the depths of that gloomy darkness the names of those two happy playmates of my childhood; but, alas! there can be no response, save the echo of my own words falling dead and cold upon my ear.

Here in this old house center my first recollections

—a house where my ancestors had lived for a century and a half; and in the little graveyard just beyond the hill, I hope soon to lie among them—the last of my race.

Well do I remember the rainy days spent in that dusty attic—the El Dorado of my infancy—with its lumber of old furniture and spinning wheels, tapestried with the finest fabrics from Arachne's loom, and festooned with branches of dried sage and other garden herbs, gathered and hung there in my grandmother's time. Here, with my two little friends, Edgar and Margaret, I played the time away—happy days they were. We were neither troubled by childish quarrels, nor were our noisy rompings restrained by the presence of elders; for the only occupants of the house besides the servants were we three children and Mr. Davenport, our tutor, who, however, was with us only during the forenoon and at supper. My mother I never remember, and my father seldom came to Millville, as he was too much engaged in his business in the city to think often of his little family away in the Berkshire Hills. He considered that he was doing his duty in providing for us a pleasant home and enough to eat.

Margaret was not my sister, but the child of a cousin of my mother, who had been in our family since babyhood, as had also Edgar, who was no re-

lation of ours, but had been adopted, it seems, into our little circle about the time of my birth. We were near the same age, Edgar being about a year older than I, and we celebrated our birthdays always together. In appearance, Edgar was tall and slim, with that olive complexion which neither pales nor flushes; his eyes were large and black, but with none of the sharpness so common to eyes of that color; his cast of features was rather Oriental, his manner reserved and thoughtful.

Was there ever such a round and rosy little woman as our nurse Mary? I believe not, or else I looked in those days with other eyes. Mary was our mother and father, all in one, and at the same time like one of us children. To be sure many persons better fitted for the care of young people might easily have been found, but none in the world more capable of loving or more lovable—and love was just what we wanted, and love was just what no one else but Mary gave us. Mary was superstitious in the extreme, and had the profoundest respect for all charms, from the pod with nine peas hung over the kitchen door, to the rusty horse-shoe or spilt salt; and many a time have we, with breathless interest, broken the dry turkey bone together to see which should win the secret wish-never to be told on pain of forfeiture. Never can I forget those glorious evenings when, in summer on

the lawn, or in winter by the fireside, with us children about her, she would tell stories of ghosts and goblins, and the good fairies of the meadow, till our eyes grew wide in wonder, and we were finally tucked away in our beds in a most delicious state of mingled fear and security.

There is another whose face rises before me now, as I brighten up the mirror of the past; it is a face of expressionless feature, perfect in form, with a Greek profile, but with eyes cold and dead. This is our tutor, Mr. Davenport. Well do I recall him as he sat beside me at the supper-table. I never dared to look at his face, but studied his features at leisure and in safety, as they were reflected in the silver cover of the butter dish, which always stood before him. There was one thing in this reflection which always pleased my fancy; just behind the table, and over the chimney piece, hung a set of English antlers, the trophy of some hunting excursion of my father; these also were to be seen in the silver mirror, but so reflected as to appear to grow from Mr. Davenport's head, and always put me in mind of a picture I had seen of his Satanic Majesty in an old print I had of Martin Luther hurling his inkstand at the Devil. Sometimes I could not help looking up to see if there were not some horns actually there, but he was sure

to catch my eye, and I always felt as if he devined my purpose.

It was a quiet life we had at the old house then—lessons in the forenoon, and a drive and play in the afternoon till bedtime; each day the same as its predecessor, varied only by our rambles about the country, Sometimes we wouid follow the course of the lovely Green River, or build little water-wheels by the old grist mill on its bank, and talk to imaginary water people, asking them questions and taking our answers from the soft purling and gurgling of the stream. Margaret would often wish to go down with them to the great sea, and look at their pretty treasures, and then it seemed to us that the purling of the waters grew louder, and its little waves dashed higher, and we would clap our hands in joy and laugh, while Edgar, more brave than the rest, would bury his head in the clear, emerald water, and gravely tell us, when he drew it out, all dripping and shining, that the water people had told him some secrets which they would tell only to brave people who dared to come down to them as he did. Yes, this was long before Bryant's "Sella" was written, and we, with our childish imaginations, walked and talked with the "water-folk," for we had Sella's white slippers of innocence then, and they carried us to many strange lands.

There was then—and there are still, vestiges of it standing at the end of the meadow—a little hut built close against a huge mass of rocks which bears the name of Mount Peter. In this primitive house lived an Indian woman, whose strange mode of life and wild appearance led us to look upon her as a witch. People said she was a descendant of the Stockbridge tribe, but certain good judges considered her a foreigner—possibly a gypsy or East Indian. Nevertheless Mother Madge, as we called her, was a great friend of us children, and taught us many kinds of bead work, at which she was an adept. Madge never spoke, and I do not know to this day what was the reason for her silence. Yet she understood us well, and we soon became accustomed to her signs. It may seem strange, (but children have strange fancies) that, friendly and intimate as we were with her by day, as soon as the sun set we were somewhat afraid of her. She seemed to know this and never disturbed us. I said we feared her, but I must except Edgar, who in the long summer evenings would sit and work at his bead work with her before her door, in the moonlight, while Margaret and I with Mary, on the lawn, would watch their shadows or listen to Edgar singing. When there was no moon it was our great delight to watch for Edgar, and follow with our eyes the lantern-light as he swung it in

the darkness of the meadow below us, and Mary would say he was king of the fireflies, and that Madge took the gay little insects into her hut by day, and let them out as soon as night came.

One evening we were all swinging in the hammock, and Mary, seated in a rustic chair beside us, was telling about some prince of the fairies who had loved a mortal princess, and had changed both himself and his loved one into fireflies, that they might be married. She had just reached the magic words which were to produce the wonderful metamorphosis, when a voice was heard, and my father stood before us.

Without greeting us, or taking even the least notice of our presence, though we had not seen him for many months, he spoke to our nurse: "Mary, I am indeed surprised that you should be putting such nonsense into these children's heads, and, also, I learn through the kindness of Mr. Davenport," (here he turned to our tutor, who stood beside him,) "that they are in the habit of visiting the Indian woman in the meadow. This must be stopped, and that it may be done effectually, the boys shall leave here to-morrow with Mr. Davenport. Good-night, and you had better go into the house at once."

Ah! how we cried that night when we went to bed, and Mary was quite heart-broken. Despite my sorrow I fell asleep. It must have been about mid-

night when I was awakened by Edgar, who, in a whisper, said:

"We must bid Mother Madge good-bye, Willie; she will miss us. Come let us go down."

"But our clothes are not here; Mary took them to brush," I answered.

"I am going this way, Willie, and in my bare feet, just as the pilgrims we read of did when they went to the sacred shrines, and Mother Madge will see that we loved her all the more."

We quietly stole down the stairs, and out on the lawn through a verandah window. The fireflies were still in the meadow.

"See how they shine, Willie; they are like little jewels. When I am married, Willie, my wife shall wear these instead of diamonds, because they have life and are better than the dead stones."

I was too much awed by the novelty of our situation, for the remark to make much impression, and the dew on the grass made me shiver.

Edgar took my hand, and we walked like two little ghosts over the meadow in our long, white night-dresses, scarcely making a sound. There was a light in Madge's hut, and as we drew near, we heard voices; creeping close to the little window we peered in, but started back immediately in wild surprise, for there, in the middle of the floor stood my father,

in excited conversation with Mother Madge, who stood erect with eyes flashing, the shawl which she usually wore upon her head, fallen off and disclosing masses of rich, black hair. Holding each other's hand, Edgar and I peered in again, this time my father was at the door and Mother Madge was pointing toward him.

Suddenly he rushed out and Madge fell back upon the bed. We threw our arms about each other and hid our faces; we were roused from our semi-stupor by the sound of the door being closed. Edgar crawled forward, I following, and tapped gently. A voice within, with a peculiar foreign accent called out:

"Who is it?"

"Edgar and Willie come to bid you good-bye, Mother Madge," we said together.

She said some words in an unknown language as she opened the door and drew us in, clasping us both in her arms.

"Good-bye, I love you much. Hurry, your father may see you. Remember Madge, Willie," and she gave me a ring of curious workmanship, in the form of a serpent with a ruby head, and taking another packet from a shelf she put into Edgar's hand a sort of locket of gold, on which was some inscription in strange characters. "Edgar do not forget me; keep this, and sometime you may be able to read it.

You are good, kind, little boys to come to me. Now hurry." With that she kissed us, and we, in a half dazed way, ran to the house.

It was the first time I had ever heard Madge's voice, and what she said to us was all spoken in broken English with a foreign accent most peculiar, yet there was a richness and heartiness about it impossible to express. We ran all the way home over the meadow, and had but reached our room when we heard my father open the front gate; we had missed him as he came by the road.

Even the excitement of the night could not keep us from our sleep, and the sun was shining brightly next morning when we awoke, Edgar with his locket hung by a string about his neck, and I with my precious ring clasped firmly in my hand.

The sad parting with Margaret and Mary I will pass over. The first clouds of sorrow had arisen in our young lives.

* * * * * * * *

Edgar grew to be a tall, handsome fellow; both he and I had just finished our course at the Wurtzburg University, and were waiting letters from my father in reference to our future actions. During the ten years past, little change had taken place at Millville, and Margaret's weekly letter always gave us full accounts of all occurrences.

Margaret had grown to be a lovely girl as we could see by the pictures she sent us, and both Edgar and I were anxious to meet her again, and watched eagerly for the letter from my father. Edgar had a decided inclination toward religious pursuits, and we would almost every day attend some services at the great cathedral, where he would listen with the deepest interest to the prayers and watch the actions of the officiating priest, and explain their meaning to me when we came out. I went with him rather to hear the beautiful music than anything else, and to hear the bishop, an old man with white hair, chant the "Gloria Patri." His voice was clear and grand, his whole soul seemed to enter into the words, and I could feel my body thrill while he pronounced the lines.

About this time, Edgar had a dream in which he thought that the locket which Mother Madge had given him broke open, and there was a key within which opened the door to another world. We examined the locket closely, as we had often done before, but found nothing new. Edgar wore it now as a watch-charm.

The letter came, ordering our return, and we were ready to start for Liverpool, when a second arrived announcing my father's death. The news was a great shock—I cannot say grief, for he had been dead

to us for so many years that he had been as a stranger. On receipt of this letter, Mr. Davenport's manner completely changed; for, whereas formerly he had been more attentive to me, and had treated me less disrespectfully than he had Edgar, he now left me quite unnoticed, and transferred his attentions to Edgar, who had always despised him, preferring his slights to his favors. Each offer of friendly intimacy was repulsed by Edgar.

On the train from Grimsby to Liverpool, Mr. Davenport and we two were the only occupants of the compartment. The passage over the North Sea had been very stormy, and we had been deprived of our rest for two nights. Edgar had fallen asleep in one corner and I was dozing away in the one diagonally across, while Mr. Davenport sat opposite to Edgar, with a book which he was apparently reading. After a while he laid it down, rattling the pages as he did so, and then looking at us both to see if we had been awakened.

"You seem tired," he said in a half voice, and, as neither of us replied, he nodded his head, while a smile lit up his features, which needed only the old reflection of the horns to make the resemblance to Martin Luther's visitor complete. Putting his hand into his pocket he drew out a locket, seemingly the exact counterpart of Edgar's; this he laid on the seat

beside him, and, reaching forward, clipped with some sharp instrument the ring holding the locket Edgar wore and exchanged it for the one he himself had, placing Edgar's on the seat beside him. Just then, with a loud whistle, we entered the long tunnel near Sheffield. I do not know why I did it, but I reached over and took the locket from the seat, and slipped it into my pocket. I do not know how Mr. Davenport looked on discovering his loss, for I did not dare to give even the slightest peep for fear of being suspected; and not until I heard Edgar speak did I open my eyes and give an audible yawn.

Mr. Davenport had his book open before him, but one hand was nervousiy fumbling in the back of the cushions, and his face was very white.

"Have you lost anything, Mr. Davenport?" I asked; "let me help you search for it," and I stepped forward as if to help him, enjoying to the utmost his confused expression and evident agitation.

"No, it is nothing, only my book-mark," he answered, at the same time lying down upon the seat so as to effectually prevent my searching. "It is of no value; I am tired, and will try to sleep."

So saying, he threw his handkerchief over his face and rested his head on the seat-arm, but all the time I could see his hand carefully feeling between the cushions. At Liverpool Mr. Davenport stayed be-

hind a little, and spoke to the guard. He told us that he had lost a gold lead-pencil, and had given his address, that it might be forwarded to him if found. I could not restrain a laugh as he said this, but I was sorry for it in a moment, for it disclosed to him that I was in possession of his secret. The same afternoon we left England, and as we steamed down the Mersey, Mr. Davenport came to me, and, with a most friendly smile, said :

"So you watched me, William? Well, I don't mind if you do know that I took it; for I can easily explain it to you. You see, this locket of Edgar's is of no value except to science, on account of the inscription upon it; so I had one made of equal value, and thought it rather an honest theft, as I hope to be able to return the original in time, afrer I have used it in some scientific researches. Of course, I could have asked Edgar for it; but you know how odd he is, so you can understand now my seemingly disgraceful action."

"Mr. Davenport," I answered, and I know not how the words came, "I know the true value of that locket; it is in my possession, and I shall keep it."

He looked at me some time, and then smiled in his most devilish way :

"We may as well make short work of this business, Willie," he said. "You know as well as I do

that the property will be lost to you if this leaks out. You and I alone in the world know of it—except, of course, the woman. Your father gave me the papers for safe keeping, and I have them safe and always ready, and have waited for my time. I don't offer them to you because I love you. Oh, no; but because in so doing I come out the better off, for I fear Edgar. Now, I will keep the secret, Willie, if you will give me twenty thousand dollars. I talk plainly. For twenty thousand dollars it shall be yours, and no one shall ever know. Do you accept? If you do not, I know well what to do."

I knew not what to reply. I was perfectly ignorant of his meaning, but I feigned to understand him that I might discover his deviltry, so I began to cavil at the price he asked, and said :

"Who can tell that it is worth that much to me?"

He looked at me in surprise mingled with contempt, and said :

"What, your father's fortune not worth that! But perhaps you think the papers are not proof enough; but you shall see. Come down to my room. Not worth twenty thousand dollars!"

Arriving at his room, we entered, and he carefully locked the door.

"Your father always supposed these papers safe at Millville, but I have never had them away from my

person since he gave them to me, as they are too valuable to become the property of another without some return. The locket, of course, was of even more worth to us, as we daily ran the risk of the characters being transalated by some one who could read Hindu. But at present let us look at the papers."

He took them from an oil-silk case in his pocket, and, opening one of them, held it up to me so that I could read it. I offered to take it, but he would not let me touch it. I looked at it and saw it was a marriage paper, stating that Captain William Greylock and Henrietta Balfour were married by the Reverend Charles McClintock, of Calcutta, October 20, 1829.

"That is my father's marriage with my mother," I said.

"And this?"

I read it as he held it up before me :

"This certifies that Captain William Greylock and Vshas Ganya were married at the English Mission, at Rajmahal, Bengal, November 3, 1828, by Reverend William Morriss."

To each of these notices were appended seals, and the names of witnesses. He folded the papers and returned them to his pocket.

"So, you see, I have good proofs, and you know

their value. Vshas Ganya still lives, but during your father's lifetime she loved him too much to disgrace him, despite his cruel treatment of her, fondly hoping that he would acknowledge her son his lawful heir when he died. Edgar shall never know of this, and you shall have the papers for twenty thousand dollars. The locket was his only proof of his birthright, and that is now also yours. I had hoped to sell it to you with the papers, but you have won the game there. Edgar, of course, knows nothing of this, not even that Vshas Ganya or Mother Madge is his mother. She can say what she will, now, for she will only be laughed at and called insane."

I had scarcely moved from the first, the revelation had benumbed me. He looked at me steadily, and then with a half-smothered, exulting laugh, he said:

"Well, Master Greylock, or rather Balfour, I will sell you a fortune and one other thing of some value, possibly—a good name."

I was no longer numb; the blood rushed through my veins. I could stand the strain no longer, and as he bent his mocking face toward me, I struck him with all my might and he fell upon the floor.

I snatched the papers from him and rushed upon deck. Edgar was not to be found. I returned to the cabin and to our own room, where I found him asleep. I placed the papers in his pocket-book and

changed the lockets. The inscriptions on the copy were quite unlike the original, and now that the two lockets were brought together, it seemed strange that the deceit had not been noticed. I did not sleep that night, but lay restless and feverish in my berth.

* * * * * * * *

Next morning, after the events which I have just recorded, I knocked at Mr. Davenport's door. He opened it for me; his face was somewhat swollen from the effects of the blow he had received from me, but he even smiled in his old way as I entered.

"Well, Willie, you've gotten the better of me again; but I hope you will be kind to me for all I have done for you when you come into your property. Sit down."

"Mr. Davenport," I said, without accepting the proffered chair, "you far from understand me; I do not, nor have I ever wished for what is not lawfully my own. You would have committed a great crime, and more against me than against Edgar, for you have tried to make me an accomplice. The papers are now in Edgar's possession, as is also the origina locket. I have told him nothing about the circumstances, nor shall I until we reach New York. When we reach land, I shall send you an order for five thousand dollars on condition that you never come

into my presence again. As sure as you do, you shall be exposed." And so I left him.

Edgar found the papers in his pocket-book, but I asked him not to examine them till we reached New York, and he promised me. I also told him that Mr. Davenport would not see us again, but that I could then give no explanation.

On our arrival at the dock, Margaret, accompanied by old Mary, was waiting to receive us. She had been in New York since my father's death, and would remain a few weeks longer before returning. My father, by his own request, had been buried in Greenwood Cemetery. Margaret had been at his bedside when he died, and he had left a letter for me and one for Edgar in her care. The letters—both alike—contained the story of his life, and his bitter repentance when too late to repair the injuries he had done.

By these letters we learned that, while captain of a trading ship, he had visited Calcutta, where he met the daughter of an English officer, whom he loved and who returned his affection. They were engaged, but on account of some little misunderstanding, he in anger, went away to an interior province, and met at one of the British Missions a beautiful Hindu girl, whom he wooed and married more in pique than in love. She was a Christian, and could speak some

English. As time went on, he repented of his rashness, and, his old love returning, in a fatal moment he left Rajmahal, and returned, secretly as he thought, to Calcutta, where his affianced, having mourned for him as lost, met him with all affection, and they were married, setting sail a few months after for America. Among the passengers was Vshas Ganya, the Hindu girl, his wife, who had followed him all the way from Rajmahal.

She made no complaint, nor would she accept any money from him, only demanding that he should take her child —now a month old—care for him, and at his death make him his heir. She did not expose him nor claim her right, for she loved the pretty English girl who had taken her place, and cared for the little boy who was born after their arrival in America, and upon whom his mother never looked, dying at the moment he came into the world. Now was the time for my father to right the wrongs done his wife; but he, in his grief for the dead treasure of his heart, and embittered against all the world, drove her away in anger. The two little boys were then sent to Millville, where Mary was living with Margaret, the orphaned child of an American cousin of my mother. Vshas Ganya, to be near her child, followed us to Millville, and there lived as we had known her, as

Mother Madge, loving still her hard-hearted husband too well to expose him.

He had taken Mr. Davenport into his confidence, and given him the position of instructor to his children, that he might watch and see that she told them nothing of whom she was. She persistently refused his money, and earned her small pittance by making embroideries and bead-work.

"Willie, you are my brother now," said Edgar, as we retired that night, "and I can tell you now that you shall have a sister in Margaret soon. She loves me as I have always loved her, and Willie, there were some few little letters came to Wurzburg, which you did not see. To-morrow we must go to Millville to bring my mother, our dear old Mother Madge, away. There shall be no change made in our affairs; we will all live happily together, beyond the reach of the curious world. God bless you, Willie, and us all. Good-night."

We did not leave till the afternoon train, for Margaret was ill with a cough, which, however, did not seem serious, and as she was much better by noon, we took the late train for Millville. It was a warm day, but a terrible rain was pouring down, and the wind howled most frightfully. The railway track was threatened in many places, and it was with a sense

of relief that we alighted at the depot in Millville and drove up to the old house.

Edgar had just laid aside his coat and hat and walked to the verandah window, the window from which we had escaped that night so long ago to bid Mother Madge good-bye.

"My God! Willie," he cried, the meadow is all overflowed; there is a light swinging at Madge's hut. God bless you, Willie, I must go."

He caught me to his breast for a moment, and with a kiss, he sprang from the window down over the lawn to the meadow, which was now one sheet of white water. I could see him as he waded in; it was up to his knees at first and then grew deeper. He was swimming now, and as he neared the hut where Mother Madge stood upon the roof, I could hear him cry above the howling of the wind and the beating of the rain:

"Mother, it is I, your Edgar! Mother, I am here!"

He climbed to the roof, and I could see them clasped in each other's arms, by the light of the moon which now and then shone out from behind the broken, angry clouds. I saw now why they did not leave their place for the rocks rose behind in a perpendicular wall, and before them the angry water was growing deeper each moment. I at once ran to the stable and brought a rope, and with the two men

ran by the road to the top of Mount Peter. We were just in time, for the water was fast nearing the roof. The rope was lowered, having first been wound round a tree, when, suddenly, the moon was gone, a crash was heard below us in the darkness. We groaned and covered our faces; nothing could be done to save them, and the only hope was that they had clung to the floating wreck. We called up the town and searched the banks of the meadow, but nothing was found. No boat could be guided on the whirling, eddying water. Edgar was gone forever—no, not forever, thank God! Nothing was ever found of them, though most diligent search was made.

I sent for Margaret and Mary, and we mourned together for long months, and looked in dread on that green meadow where we once had been so happy, and upon the cruel river which held all we had ever loved on earth. I was much alarmed for Margaret's health now. The shock had done her great harm, and the doctors recommended a change of climate, but she would not consent to leave Millville, where her treasure was buried. Thus we lived together day after day, walking short distances in the town, under the great elms, on the street, or reading on the lawn. It was a little over a year since Edgar had left us. Ever since then Margaret had grown worse; her disease had taken deeper root. The

cough had quite disappeared, but she grew weaker each day. We were seated together on the veranda overlooking the meadow. It was evening, but the doctor had said it could do her no harm, and as Margaret loved to sit there and watch the fireflies and talk over our happy childhood days, we made it our after-supper resting place. I had no one now in the world but Margaret since Edgar, (I can never say died,) went away, and to her alone could I tell my griefs and joys, and for many months past there had sprung up in my heart a longing to call her my own. To know that Edgar had loved her made me love her all the more, and as I saw her fading slowly away from me, my heart would almost break, and in bitter anguish I would cry to myself:

"My God! and is there nothing for me in all this world? No father or mother have ever been mine; when I found a friend he was taken away, and now my last, my love, my Margaret."

"Margaret," I said to her, as I drew my chair nearer to her side, "Margaret, I love you; we are best fitted to help each other on in life; will you take me and love me as you would have loved Edgar?"

"Willie, it is well; I do love you, but, Willie, I fear I cannot stay with you long."

"Do not say that Margaret. You shall get well.

See, I have here a ring for you, ready; let me put it on your finger."

She gave me her hand, and, kissing her I put the ring upon it.

"What kind of a stone is it, Willie?" she said; "It is too dark here to see."

"Feel it and guess," I answered laughing.

She put her finger on the ring, but drew it back with a sharp cry of pain.

"Something stung me," she said. We went to the window and looked at the wounded finger and examined the ring. The stone, (it was the ruby ring which Mother Madge had given me,) was gone, and the sharp claw of the setting had pricked her finger. We returned to our chairs.

"I will have another set there to-morrow as soon as"——

"Look, look, Willie, there it is, see."

I looked at her hand, and there, flashing like a living jewel, was a bright firefly. Edgar's words rushed upon my mind: "My wife shall wear these; not the stones for they are cold and dead."

I rose, with a cry, and threw myself at Margaret's feet. She laid her hand upon my head. The firefly hovered about us.

"Willie do not grieve when I tell you that I am dying. Good bye."

She lay back in her chair, and all was still. I did not stir, but lay as in a trance. Suddenly I was aware of a presence beside me and a voice whispered in my ear:

"Willie all will be well; let it not grieve you that Margaret has accepted me. My jewel was better than the cold hard stone for her." It was my Edgar back again.

The pain of sorrow has left me, and when the fireflies dance over the meadow, I sit in the darkness and watch them, while two companions are ever by my side; and we sit and talk together, as of old but our voices are inaudible to others. These two companions are my Edgar and my Margaret.

[THE END.]

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